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THE NORTHERN DILEMMA: PUBLIC POLICY AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NORTHERN ONTARIO, by David M. Cameron, a Discussion Paper prepared for and published by the Ontario Economic Council. Copies are available only at the Ontario Government Bookstore, 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N8. Price: 3.50.

TORONTO, April 5 -- A revamping of government policy and changes to institutional structures are necessary if post-secondary education in northern Ontario is to make contributions to cultural and economic development there, says a discussion paper released today by the Ontario Economic Council.

David M. Cameron, in The Northern Dilemma: Public Policy and Post-Secondary Education in Northern Ontario, calls for organizational changes on two levels. "First, certain basic features of the present network of 10 (educational) institutions must be altered if there is to be adequate capacity to design and deliver the kind and quality of educational programmes envisaged by the provincial policy. Second, a new structure for provincial-institutional relations will be required in order to elaborate and administer such a policy."

He suggests a new advisory council be established that would address the specific post-secondary education problems in northern Ontario as well as look after distinct funding. The council would also have a limited operational role, assuming responsibility for programme approval, particularly in the area of extension.

The need for changes to public policy, he says, derives from a rationale for post-secondary education in the north that will respond to the needs of the north more than the logic of systems developed in and for the south.

Mr. Cameron stresses, however, that any public policy changes will require the support of all institutions and that many of the problems can only be solved by active intervention on the part of the province. In addition, he recommends changes to the organization of the delivery system for post-secondary education in the north. "The present institutional structure," says the author, "is simply not adequate to the task of delivering appropriate programmes to the right people where and when they are required."

Mr. Cameron emphasizes that these changes would establish a distinct post-secondary education policy for the north. Such a distinct policy is necessary not only because education in the north is more expensive than in southern Ontario, but also because the north poses unique challenges to the design and delivery of university and college education.

"In the most general terms," he says "the objective of a post-secondary policy for the north should be to create a post-secondary system which is more fully responsive to the needs of northern Ontarians, while still operating within the framework of established educational policy for the province as a whole." Three objectives for the policy, according to the author, would be economic development, cultural development, and equality of access. The policy would contain five basic elements; instruction, research, decentralization and extension, bilingualism and education for the native Indians.

The author insists that institutional reorganization is necessary in order to "break down artificial and counterproductive boundaries between elements of post-secondary education and thereby freeing the resultant institutions to move forward in responding to the needs of northern students and northern communities."

Mr. Cameron breaks down his proposals for structural change into two categories: northwestern Ontario (Thunder Bay) and northeastern Ontario (Sudbury, Sault. Ste. Marie and North Bay). He points out that the immediate problem in Thunder Bay centres upon the diploma programmes offered by Lakehead University. These programs are usually offered by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATS) but in Thunder Bay, Confederation College is deprived of these standard diploma courses because of the competition from Lakehead.

To resolve the problem, Mr. Cameron recommends the amalgamation of the two institutions into one, which would be built on the strengths and traditions of both Lakehead and Confederation College. He recommends "the principle of integrated diploma and degree programmes in selected areas of vocational or professional education be consolidated and expanded to other areas of relevance to the region." He also stresses that the new institution must be assigned particular responsibility in the areas of extension and native education. "With a greater institutional capacity for planning and delivery and with access to increased funds, the foundation should be available on which to build more comprehensive and long-term programmes in these extremely important areas."

Turning to northeastern Ontario, the author believes the affiliation arrangement involving Laurentian University and the three university colleges in Hearst, North Bay and Sault St. Marie now shows signs of stress and inadequacy. As well, there seem to be too many post-secondary institutions for the available population and enrolment.

To overcome these and other problems, the author recommends the amalgamation of "CAATS and universities at least in those centres which currently host both types of institutions. This alternative would respect the decentralized character of northeastern Ontario, and would heal the artificial split between academic and vocational education. It might as well -- although this would not necessarily be the case -- create institutions with the capacity to respond more fully to the several elements of the proposed post-secondary policy for the north."

Specifically, he recommends the merger of Nipissing University College, which is affiliated with Laurentian University, and Canadore College into a single institution. The new institution would not be affiliated with any other school, and would allow North Bay "to take its proper place within a decentralized system of post-secondary institutions."

Mr. Cameron also recommends a similar amalgamation in Sault Ste. Marie for Algoma and Sault Colleges. For Hearst College, "the appropriate alternative to the present arrangement," he says, "is the transformation of Le Collège de Hearst into an off-campus satellite of a revamped and enlarged extension programme emanating from Laurentian."

In addition to increasing its support of bilingual programs at Laurentian University, the author stresses the need for the province to also transform Cambrian College into a "truly bilingual institution." The immediate objective would be to draw the two institutions into "complementary roles in the provision of post-secondary education. The ultimate objective should be the consolidation of both into a single institution," a process the author believes would take about five years.

The author also suggests that Northern College should serve as the host institution, particularly in Timmins, for university-level courses offered by other institutions, particularly Laurentian.

Professor Cameron's Discussion Paper was prepared under the auspices of the Ontario Economic Council, an autonomous research agency funded by the Province of Ontario. The Council acts as an independent advisor to government and all political parties, undertakes research and policy studies to encourage the optimum development of the human and material resources of Ontario, and supports the advancement of all sectors of the Province. The Council achieves these goals by sponsorship of research projects, publication of studies, and organization of the Outlook and Issues conferences and seminars which are open to the public.

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NOTE: A list of persons to contact for further information, a brief biographical sketch of the author, and a selection of quotations from the study are attached.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David M. Cameron is the director of the School of Public Administration, Dalhousie University. He has written extensively on education policy and intergovernment relations.

Dr. Cameron holds a B.A. (Political Science) from Queen's University and an M.A., Phil.D., and Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. A native of British Columbia, he also attended the University of British Columbia.

THE NORTHERN DILEMMA: PUBLIC POLICY AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NORTHERN ONTARIO is available only at the Ontario Government Bookstore, 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N8. Price: \$3.50. A cheque or money order payable to the Treasurer of Ontario must accompany all mail orders.

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SELECTED QUOTATIONS

"The two degree-granting universities in the north, Lakehead and Laurentian, were both created by provincial statute in the 1960's as a direct manifestation of the provincial government's twin objectives of universal accessibility to secular institutions. Despite the existence of strong grass-roots pressure to establish universities in particular northern communities, these institutions remain fundamentally creatures of provincial policy. The problems which currently beset them are inextricably bound up with the policies which created them. It is for precisely this reason that a study of postsecondary education in northern Ontario must be at least as concerned with the substance and impact of provincial policy as with the organization and operation of the institutions themselves." (Pg. 4)

"Without question, then, the design and governance of northern Ontario's five colleges, as with its two universities, is a matter intimately bound up with provincial policy. And when to this is added the unique challenges that face any postsecondary institution which must grapple with the northern geography, climate, economic and social structure, one comes face to face with the central dilemma of postsecondary education policy for northern Ontario." (Pg. 7)

"While it is clear that Ontario has no identifiable policy for the north, or for postsecondary education in the north, this has not resulted in similar treatment of northern universities and colleges relative to their southern counterparts. The provincial government has responded to the northern dilemma differently in the two postsecondary systems, and gives no evidence of being troubled either by the inconsistency or the lack of explicit criteria governing the differential treatment in either case." (Pg. 39)

"There is compelling evidence to suggest that per-student overhead costs will be higher in the north regardless of the size of institutions involved or the particular objectives of their educational programmes. The two principal causes of higher costs are climate and distance from metropolitan centres. These two factors lead directly to higher costs for such overhead items as fuel, travel, telephone, and a variety of other goods and services. The difficulty lies in estimating with any precision the actual differentials that will exist." (Pgs. 42-43)

"Five interrelated choices emerge as requiring resolution. First, is the north to maintain distinct college and university systems, despite the economies which might be derived from the intergration and more efficient utilization of closely related programmes and facilities? Second, what is the proper emphasis as between vocational and professional programmes on the one hand and general academic programmes on the other? Third, what emphasis is to be placed on part-time, continuing education, and extension programmes as opposed to full-time programmes directed primarily to the recent high school graduate? Fourth, should postsecondary education in the north be concentrated in a few centralized institutions or decentralized through a geographically dispersed delivery system? Finally, what are the appropriate cultural and recreational responsibilities of the postsecondary system, beyond programmes of formal instructions?" (Pgs. 63-64)

"What has emerged from this venture into the uncertain world of northern postsecondary costs is the conclusion that incremental overhead costs do exist and probably represent something in the order of five per cent of operating income. There may also be costs arising from the existence of excess capacity in some institutions. In this case, however, it is quite possible that costs could be reduced by a re-direction of students within the postsecondary system, although such a solution would likely be short-lived, given the prospect of generally declining levels of enrolment." (Pg. 64)

"... there appears to be general agreement within Laurentian and its affiliates that the senate takes very little interest in the affiliates and is limited in exercising even its negative function by the lack of contact with the affiliates." (Pg. 93)

"To date there has been no discernible postsecondary policy for the north as such. Rather, universities have developed primarily within a twin provincial commitment to accessibility and secular institutions. To this was added a third element in the mid 1960's with the establishment of a network of colleges of applied arts and technology. Many of the problems now encountered in the north originated in the simple adoption for the north of institutional and other structures which had evolved or were developed to meet quite different situations in southern Ontario. Provincial financing of postsecondary education has been largely shaped by the principle of fiscal neutrality, a principle which implies that provincial grants should not deliberately distort the programme preferences of recipient institutions. With a few significant exceptions provincial policy has contained no deliberate commitment to resolving the special problems of universities and colleges in the north. These special problems begin with the higher overhead costs of northern institutions. But that is by no means the end of the story. If it were, the province would be faced with a straightforward choice between the provision of additional funds - such as is currently provided through the Northern Grant to universities - and the acceptance of lower quality or potentially even bankruptcy for northern institutions." (Pg. 129)

"Cultural development clearly constitutes a valid rationale for preferential funding insofar as the province is prepared to support the cultural aspiration of its northern residents. Universities and colleges can and do make significant contributions to the quality of life in the north, and the additional cost attendant upon these contributions might well be distinguished and supported in a more explicit and extensive manner than is now the case." (Pg. 140)

"... we are not proposing that postsecondary education pursue objectives entirely different from those which guide the formulation and implementation of policy in the south. Rather, we are suggesting that these general objectives be modified and in some cases restrained in order to accommodate the particular objectives appropriate to the north. ... In short, northern universities and colleges must not be merely northern extensions of a province-wide system of postsecondary education. ... It requires a responsiveness to northern needs and an entrepreneurial approach to northern opportunities. It must be through people and institutions within the north that the objectives of postsecondary policy are given shape and life." (Pgs. 142-143)